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PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA!

JOHN LETCHER

AND HIS ANTECEDENTS.

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READ AND CIRCULATE.

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RICHMOND:

PRINTED AT THE WHIG BOOK AND JOB OFFICE.

1859.

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From  
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1847

## TO THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA.

In the town of Lexington, in the year 1847, the following question was discussed before the Franklin Society:

*“Should the people of Western Virginia delay any longer in taking steps to bring about a division of the State.”*

The Franklin Society met every Saturday night—the debate was protracted from the 30th of January to the 24th of April. On this question John Letcher made three speeches, on the negative side—maintaining that the *people of Western Virginia should NOT delay any longer in taking steps to bring about a DIVISION OF THE STATE.*

Mr. Letcher's first speech was made *before* Dr. Ruffner addressed the Society on the subject. Mr. Letcher and Dr. Ruffner advocated the same side of the question. *Both urged immediate action to bring about a division of Virginia, and assailed the institution of slavery as an evil which the West would get rid of by separating from the East.*

The argument of Mr. Ruffner was considered by Mr. Letcher and others so “able” and “unanswerable” and so great was Mr. Letcher's anxiety to circulate such an argument through the country, that he and ten others solicited its publication by the following letter:

“LEXINGTON, VA., Sept. 1, 1847.

*“Dear Sir,—*The undersigned, believing that the argument recently delivered by you in the Franklin Society, in favor of the removal of the negro population from Western Virginia, was not only able, but unanswerable, and that its publication will tend to bring the public mind to a correct conclusion on that momentous question, request that you will furnish us with a full statement of that argument for the press.

*“We cannot expect that you will now be able to furnish us*

with the speech precisely as it was delivered, nor is it our wish that you shall confine yourself strictly to the views then expressed. Our desire is to have the whole argument in favor of the proposition presented to the public, in a perspicuous and condensed form. And, believing that your views were not only forcible but conclusive, and that they were presented in the shape which cannot give just cause of offence to even those who are most fastidious and excitable on all subjects having any connexion with the subject of slavery, we trust that you will be disposed cheerfully to comply with our request above expressed.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servants,

S. McD. MOORE,  
JOHN LETCHER,  
DAVID P. CURRY,  
JAMES A. HAMILTON,  
GEO. A. BAKER,  
J. H. LACY,  
JOHN ECHOLS,  
JAMES R. JORDAN,  
JACOB FULLER, JR.,  
D. E. MOORE,  
JOHN W. FULLER.

The Rev. HENRY RUFFNER, D. D.”

To which Dr. Ruffner gave the following reply:

“LEXINGTON, VA., Sept. 4, 1847.

“TO MESSRS. MOORE, LETCHER, &C.

“*Gentlemen*,—Though long opposed in feeling to the perpetuation of slavery, yet, like others, I felt no call to immediate action to promote its removal, until the close of the important debate in the Franklin Society, to which your letter alludes. The arguments delivered by several of yourselves, and the results of my own examination of facts, so impressed my mind with the importance of the subject to the welfare of the country, that I proceeded immediately to write out an argument in favor of a gradual removal of slavery from my native soil, our dear West Virginia; and intended in some way to present it to the consideration of my fellow-citizens. Some months ago, you privately signified a desire that it might be printed, and have now formally made the request.

“I cheerfully comply, so far as this, in the first instance, that I will prepare for the press an Address to the Citizens of West Virginia, comprising the substance of the argument as delivered

by me, enriched and strengthened by some of the impressive views exhibited by several of yourselves. Within the limits of a moderately sized pamphlet, it is impossible to introduce every important consideration bearing on the subject, or to do more than present the substance of the prominent facts and reasons which were more fully exhibited and illustrated by the debaters in the Society.

“As we are nearly all slaveholders, and none of us approve of the principles and measures of the sect of abolitionists, we think that no man can be offended with us for offering to the people an argument, whose sole object is to show that the prosperity of our West Virginia—if not of East Virginia also—would be promoted by removing gradually the institution of slavery, in a manner consistent with the rights and interests of slaveholders.

“To the Great Being who rules the destinies of our country, I commit the issue of this important movement.

Yours,

HENRY RUFFNER.”

Under these circumstances the Ruffner address was published and the most monstrous libel upon the institution of slavery industriously circulated for the perusal of slaveholders.

It will be seen from the above correspondence, that Dr. Ruffner was informed by Mr. Letcher, and others, that it was not expected that he would furnish the speech precisely as it was delivered—nor did they desire that he should confine himself strictly to the views therein expressed. But, on the contrary, he was requested to furnish the *whole argument* in favor of *at once taking steps to bring about a division of the Commonwealth of Virginia, chiefly, if not only because of their violent opposition to slavery.*

To this request Dr. Ruffner replied, as will be seen by reference to his letter, that he would prepare the address, comprising the substance of the argument, as delivered by him, “*enriched and strengthened by some of the impressive views exhibited by several*” of the members of the Society, of whom John Letcher was one.

Thus this Address embodied the views and wishes of John Letcher. To it he subscribed at the time, and its circulation was extended under the sanction of his name.

Since the mention of Mr. Letcher’s name as a Candidate for

Governor, he presents himself to the public by the following letter:

“LEXINGTON, VA., June 25th, 1858.

“*To the Editor of the South:*

“The Richmond *Whig* of the 21st inst. contains an article on the Gubernatorial Election, in which reference is made to Dr. Ruffner’s Address on the subject of Slavery, and the connection of myself and others with its publication. I have no complaint to make of the Editor for his reference, as my acts and opinions are proper subjects of criticism; nor do I seek to evade any just responsibility for either.

“At the time of the publication of that Address, I state frankly, that I did regard Slavery as a social and political evil. I did not regard it then, or since, as a moral evil, for I was at that time, have been ever since, and am now the owner of slave property, by purchase and not by inheritance. I think I can hazard nothing in saying that, at that day, such an opinion was held by a large number of the citizens of Virginia, on both sides of the Blue Ridge. Since that time, much more attention has been given to the question; it has been much more thoroughly examined in all its bearings, and is much better understood, not only in Virginia, but throughout the entire South. All must admit, that, within the last ten years, the question has been discussed with an ability never before expended upon it, and an impression thus made upon the public mind that has resulted in an almost entire revolution of public sentiment. Previous to 1847, I had given very little consideration to it; subsequently, however, I did examine it, and became entirely satisfied, not only that my opinion, as to the social and political influence of the institution, was erroneous, but I acknowledged my error.

“When I became a candidate for a seat in the Reform Convention, the subject having been alluded to in the progress of the canvass, I avowed, in my speech to the people of Augusta, that I had changed my opinion; and stated that if my fidelity to the institution was distrusted by any man, it was his duty to oppose my election to the position I sought at the hands of the people. I was elected, and my course in the Convention, and for the past seven sessions in Congress, on all matters connected with slavery, will attest the sincerity of my convictions. The Journals of both bodies are accessible, and to them I refer for my votes.

“The *Whig* of the 23d inst. contains a much longer article on the same subject, which embodies the letter addressed to Dr. Ruffner and sundry extracts from the address. The speech delivered in the Franklin Society was a calm argument on the

social and political influence of Slavery upon the agricultural and mechanical development of Western Virginia. The published address contained many things so exceptionable that those (with one exception, I believe,) who called upon him to publish the speech, refused to contribute to the cost of the publication of the pamphlet. These facts are well known here.

“In conclusion, I have only to add, that those who distrust my fidelity to my native State and her institutions, are bound by every consideration of duty to themselves, and the community in which we live, to oppose my elevation to any political position I may aspire to.

J. LETCHER.”

To this letter Dr. Ruffner replied in the following:

“TO THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA:

“*Fellow-Citizens*,—The Honorable John Letcher has lately come before you with a letter concerning my address on Slavery, published in 1847, at the request of himself and ten other gentlemen of Lexington, Va. In this letter he charges me with having committed a fraud on him and his ten associates, in the publication of that Address. The allegation vaguely intimates that I foisted in exceptionable things. This is a serious charge, and to me entirely new; for never before, during the ten years and nine months since the Address was published, did I hear of any such charge having been made by any one, either publicly or privately.

“Since great ignorance and misconception seem to exist respecting the origin and history of that Address, I will give a plain statement of facts. As few persons have copies of the pamphlet, I shall have to say something also of its contents.

“In the spring or summer of 1847, I was informed that a debate on slavery had arisen in the Franklin Society of Lexington, Va., and I was requested to attend, as the debate was expected to be long and interesting. This Society embraced most of the professional and literary gentlemen of the town, besides other intelligent citizens; and met weekly to debate questions. I was an honorary member, but did not regularly attend the meetings. This debate on slavery was continued from week to week for a considerable time.

“When I attended, I found the question to be, not whether slavery was right or wrong, but whether or not it was injurious to the public prosperity. Mr. Letcher and others took the anti-slavery side, whilst some able debaters, such as Mr. (now Judge) Brockenbrough and Col. Smith of the Virginia Military Institute were on the pro-slavery side.

“No one, so far as I remember, took the abolitionist ground,

that slaveholding is a sin, and ought, for that reason, to be abolished. With us it was merely a question of expediency, and was argued with special reference to the interests of West Virginia.

“ I joined the anti-slavery side, and, after a while, having collected some statistical facts, I made the speech which led to the publication of the Address. I was soon afterwards requested by some of our party to prepare my argument for publication, as it was thought by them to be unanswerable, and, I was told, had converted several members of the Society. I hesitated at first, and either refused or postponed compliance with the request, not wishing to appear before the public as a partisan on this question whilst I occupied the Presidential chair of Washington College, though I knew that my broken health would compel me to an early resignation.

“ But as the debate proceeded, we all became so heated under the hammer of argument, *pro* and *con*, that we were ready for an attempt to carry our views into effect. I commenced writing out the whole argument on our side; and when, about the time the debate closed, and we had a decided majority of votes in the Society, I was again spoken to, I consented to prepare for publication, not my speech merely, but, whatever else might contribute to the success of our scheme for the gradual removal of slavery from Western Virginia.

“ But I required two conditions: 1st, that those who desired the publication of the argument should present their request in writing, in terms conformable to the plan of publication which I suggested; and, 2d, that all should contribute to the cost of printing. I was willing to come out, not as an individual, but only as the organ of a respectable party; and such I thought we were, though at the outset few in number. The anti-slavery feeling had been prevalent in West Virginia, and seemed to need only such an impulse as we could give it, to recover its former strength.

Mr. Letcher and ten other gentlemen readily complied with my conditions, and addressed me the letter which was printed in the foreground of the pamphlet. In this letter the eleven gentlemen said expressly that they did not expect me to furnish my speech just as it was delivered, nor did they wish me to “ confine myself strictly to the views then expressed.” On the contrary, they desired to have “ the whole argument in favor of the proposition presented to the public in a perspicuous and condensed form.” Thus, they left it discretionary with me to add to the matter of my speech whatever I thought proper, to give

completeness and force to the argument 'in favor of removing the negro population from Western Virginia,' as they expressed it. *The whole contents of the pamphlet were written conformably to the desire expressed in this letter.*

"My colleagues added, in their letter, that the views expressed in my speech were 'in a *shape* which could not give just cause of offence to even those who were most fastidious and excitable on the subject of slavery.' This could mean only that my views were not of the *abolitionist shape*. The address presented the same views as the speech, and in the same argumentative shape. I maintained the moral right of slaveholding, and assailed the abolitionists as a morally insane, malignant, meddling and mischievous sect, with whom we would have nothing to do. But I argued strenuously, as we all did in the Society, that slavery, in its effects upon the country, was a 'pernicious institution,' &c.

"When the Address was circulated by mail and otherwise through West Virginia, we soon perceived that most of the editors and politicians of the Valley would not embark with us in an enterprise of doubtful success. They objected to our movement as ill-timed, while Northern abolitionism was raging. Without their concurrence we must fail. West of the Alleghany the pamphlet was better received; but in East Virginia some papers denounced it as abolitionist.

"It is true, as Mr. Letcher says, that my colleagues did not contribute to the cost of the publication. When the printer's bill came in, and I privately spoke to one or two of them about it, I found that for some reason there was a disinclination to contribute. Therefore I paid the printer's bill myself. As several of them aided me in the distribution of the pamphlet, and I never heard till now the charge of fraud in the publication, which I know to be false, I imagined any reason but *that*, and made no enquiry on the subject. None of our party ever, to my knowledge, objected to the contents of the Address. Now, as Mr. Letcher's charge is vague, I call upon him to specify what 'exceptionable things' I foisted into the Address. My sole object is self-defence. I accuse no one. Let him specify; then, having a definite issue, I will try conclusions with him.

HENRY RUFFNER."

*Kanawha Salines, July 15, 1858.*

Mr. Letcher not having replied to this, Dr. Ruffner subsequently made the following statement:

"FELLOW-CITIZENS OF VIRGINIA:

"Since my statement of facts concerning my pamphlet on slavery was printed, I have received a letter and copies of some

printed articles on the subject from Lexington, Va., where the pamphlet originated.

“In the ‘Valley Star,’ the Democratic paper of that place, an article under the editorial head says, in reference to the Richmond Enquirer’s construction of Mr. Letcher’s letter: ‘Dr. Ruffner is too well known in this community to have any imputation of fraud or forgery put upon him by any of our citizens. *That Mr. Letcher intended no such imputation, we have the very best means of knowing.*’

“Now, although Mr. Letcher’s letter was construed by others as well as by myself, in the sense of a dishonorable imputation on my conduct in that publication, yet, since he publicly disavows any such imputation, I cheerfully accept the disavowal. So far as that point is concerned, all ground of controversy between us is removed.”

“I wish the article in the Valley Star had been equally satisfactory in the following paragraph. The writer says: ‘There was nothing extremely wonderful in a *material variance* between a speech delivered in February and an essay printed in the following September, the speech not having been written out before delivery; and if Dr. Ruffner had been inclined to find fault with those who discovered and asserted the variance, we presume he would have done it at the time *Mr. Letcher and other gentlemen declined on that ground to subscribe to the expenses of the pamphlet.*’

“This paragraph modifies considerably the assertion in Mr. Letcher’s letter, that my pamphlet contained ‘so many exceptionable things’ not in the speech I was requested to publish, that he and the ten other gentlemen ‘with perhaps one exception, refused to contribute to the cost.’ Still the paragraph (unintentionally, I presume,) misrepresents the facts of the case. It erroneously assumes that I was requested to publish the speech *merely*; that I was informed by Mr. Letcher and others, that they declined to subscribe to the expense on the ground of ‘material variance’ between the pamphlet and the speech, and that I applied to them to ‘subscribe,’ after the pamphlet was published, &c.

“But in fact they requested me to present to the public, not simply the speech, but ‘the whole argument’ in favor of removing the negro population from West Virginia—and they subscribed a written obligation to share the expense, before I consented to publish. This paper was left with one of the signers, (not Mr. Letcher,) and when, some time after the pamphlet was published, I inquired for it, this gentleman told me that another had gotten it out of his hands. I requested that it might be found, as the printer had called for the amount of his bill (nearly \$100). I waited a short time for the paper, and hearing nothing



of it, I paid the bill myself; and, suspecting that for some reasons unknown to me, a portion of the subscribers were unwilling to pay, I said nothing and heard nothing more of the matter. I have now received authentic information, that several of the subscribers called on the printer to pay their quotas, but were told that I had paid the bill, and was unwilling to receive assistance. This report may have prevented others from offering to pay. Who or how many besides Mr. Letcher declined to pay, because the pamphlet varied from the speech, I know not. But this I know, that the pamphlet went forth with their letter requesting the publication on its front, and that not one of them ever, *publicly or to me*, objected to its contents, or withdrew from it the sanction of his name, until Mr. Letcher's letter was published, some weeks ago.

“That the pamphlet, written under excitement produced by a long debate, contains some epithets and phrases concerning slavery rather harsh and coarse I readily admit. I saw after the pamphlet came out, that they were in bad taste. I was not surprised to see that the enemies of our scheme selected these, some five or six in number, as specimens of the whole pamphlet of forty octavo pages, and used them as texts for their vituperation of the whole work. This was easier than to answer the arguments, which Mr. Letcher and the other ten gentlemen pronounced to be unanswerable, and which none of the doughty assailants of the pamphlet ever attempted to answer, or dared so much as to quote for the information of their readers. Instead of grappling with Samson, they walked round him, and slyly picking some motes out of his coat tail, held these up triumphantly, as evidence that he was a shabby fellow.

“From the articles in the Lexington papers, I discover that I committed two immaterial errors in my former statement. Not having access to the records of the Franklin Society, I mistook in supposing that my speech on slavery was delivered in the spring or summer of 1847. I learn now that it was in February of that year. I find also that the main question concerned a division of the State by the line of the Blue Ridge, and involved all the relations of West Virginia to the Eastern section. A contest was then going on between the two sections, concerning ‘the white basis’ of representation, internal improvements, &c., though the slavery question was the main topic of debate, and banished the rest from my memory. But now I am reminded how I came to introduce my argument on slavery with a series of remarks on the injuries which West Virginia suffered on account of her weakness in the Legislature, and to argue that ‘the white basis’ and the slavery question should be connected in our discussions with East Virginia. I only spoke the expressed

sentiments of those who requested the publication of my pamphlet.

“But now if my statements are suffered to pass uncontradicted, I shall not trouble the public with another word on the subject. I esteem Mr. Letcher as a gentleman and an able politician, and freely exonerate him from any intention to wrong me, since he has disavowed the imputation which he was understood to lay upon me.

HENRY RUFFNER.”

The preceding communications explain themselves, and it is scarcely necessary to comment upon them. They contain a plain and full explanation of the origin of the Ruffner Address. They show Mr. Letcher's hearty and active sympathy with the views it contains. They defy Mr. Letcher to point out in what respect the address published is *materially* different from that delivered.

With this explanation and defiance before the public since July last, Mr. Letcher has remained silent. Why? The people must judge for themselves!

Thus, upon every principle of impartial deduction and fair reasoning, Mr. Letcher stands deliberately committed to every word of this address, as it was published.

Of the views presented in this address, Mr. Letcher does not pretend, as his own letter shows, that he ever made any recantation, *except when he was a candidate for the Reform Convention*. In his letter, he says, he stated to the people of the county of Augusta, *when he was a candidate for their suffrages*, that he had *changed* his opinion. It will be observed that his letter was written only to *explain* his position upon the subject of slavery. According to that letter, he was the pledged advocate of the views and objects of Dr. Ruffner's Address, so far as he had ever expressed himself upon the subject, *until he was a candidate for the votes of the people of Augusta*. Then, *when he was a candidate for their votes*, he says he told the people of Augusta he had changed his opinion.

At that time, *Mr. Letcher was a candidate for the Reform Convention*—at that time, the county of Augusta contained more than five thousand slaves, as the census will show. *To the owners of these slaves*, when he was a candidate for the Reform Convention, he said he had changed his opinion. It will be

remembered that the *confessed object of the Ruffner Address was to separate Eastern Virginia from Western Virginia*, and that Western Virginia was to be a *free, anti-slavery, independent State*. In the details of this plan, the "Blue Ridge" was to be the *dividing line*. And it will be further remembered that the County of Augusta is one of the Eastern Counties of the West side of the "Blue Ridge." To the people of this County, *which was at that time inhabited by upwards of five thousand slaves*, he stated, *when he was a candidate for their votes* that he had changed his opinion.

Now, the County of Augusta was not the only County before whose people he was a candidate for the Reform Convention. His letter, written in June last, was to explain his position on the slavery question. He does not pretend, in that letter, that he declared to any other people, or to the people of any other County, that he had changed his opinions. So that, according to his own statement, he declared *only* to the people of one County (and that lying next to the Blue Ridge,) any change of opinion upon the subject at all. Nor did he express any change of opinion at all, until he "*was a candidate*," and then not until *his connection with the Ruffner Address was charged against him*.

Thus Mr. Letcher's identification with the Ruffner Address—its origin, end and object, is conclusively established.

Mr. Letcher was elected a member of the Convention, and made one speech upon the subject of slavery. Now, he has said in his letter, that he told the people of Augusta, when he was a candidate for the Reform Convention, that he had *changed his opinion*—and also that while he *had been* of opinion that slavery was a "*social and political evil*," he had never considered it a *moral* evil. To show what were his opinions *after* he was a *candidate* for the Reform Convention, and after he was *elected*, look into his record *in the Convention*. The following is an extract from *his speech*, delivered in the Convention when he was a member of that body. It is taken from the files of the *Richmond Enquirer*, of November 29th, 1858, of which more will be said hereafter:

"Mr. Letcher's friends (says the *Enquirer*), urge, in excuse for him, that unauthorised interpolations were made by Dr.

Ruffner. This is emphatically denied by the reverend Doctor, and in that issue of veracity we do not propose to take either side—certainly not against a man of so eminent piety and virtue as Dr. Ruffner.

“In 1850, when a member of the Reform Convention, Mr. Letcher said:

“The fact is, that gentlemen of the East, in viewing these matters, have but one idea in their heads, and that is negro-ology. [Laughter.] They never can see beyond it; and to their peculiar notions respecting its perpetuation, everything else must be made to conform. \* \* They have more boarders at the public house of entertainment, in this city, kept by Colonel Charles S. Morgan, and known as the Penitentiary, than we have. [Laughter.] Let us look at the Penitentiary statistics, and I am sorry to say to my friend from Accomac, that his portion of the State is exceedingly well represented in this useful public institution. I can only account for it, from the fact that Norfolk is in his neighborhood.

“Mr. WISE.—It is always our habit to send our rogues abroad, and not keep them amongst us. [Laughter.]

“Mr. LETCHER. But you take very good care to send them where they will be supported at the public expense. [Laughter.] You send them here to the public boarding-house, where we have to contribute our share of the money necessary to keep up the establishment. I commend this item to the consideration of gentlemen who talk about paying all the taxes, and getting none of the benefits. Tide-water is fully represented there. She has sent forty-one white persons and fifty one negroes. By the way, while upon the last subject, let me remark, that in free negroes, (that admirable class of population, so great an acquisition to any community, and one that ought to be retained among us,) you of the East beat us all hollow. [Laughter.] And it must be remembered, that upon this population, or rather upon the taxes levied upon them, you propose, in part, at least, to base representation. From Piedmont you have sent twenty-four whites and fourteen negroes. And now, how is it on the Western side of the Blue Ridge, with our majority of 93,000 white people? From the Valley we have sent sixteen white and three colored convicts; and from the trans-Alleghany forty whites and no colored convicts. So that the result, as figured up, shows that Eastern Virginia has, in that State hotel, one hundred and thirty boarders, and Western Virginia but fifty-nine. Now, I imagine that gentlemen would have claimed moral superiority over us also, had they been aware of these facts. [Laughter.] But in putting their claims on other grounds, they seem to have forgotten to refer to these important statistics, which de-

monstrate so clearly the moral superiority of Eastern over Western Virginia. I should like to know whether these boarders, in the Penitentiary, are counted as part of the population here, and permitted, in the basis of representation, to weigh against the honest men of the West? How is it? Perhaps some gentleman from Richmond can give us the information. What says my friend over the way?

“Mr. SCOTT, of Richmond.—I do not think they constitute a part of the population of Richmond or any other part of the East.

“Mr. LETCHER.—You think not?

“Mr. SCOTT, of Richmond.—I think not. But I would remind my friend from Rockbridge, that many of the boarders in the Penitentiary, sent from this city, are those who have come among us from other sections.

“Mr. LETCHER.—I know how it is in my county. A great many rogues come there from Eastern Virginia, and are sent from there here. [Laughter.] I think I may say that not more than one native-born citizen of Rockbridge has been sent to the Penitentiary from that county, for the last five or six years.”

“What argument in favor of the white basis (asks the Enquirer) can be derived from such gratuitous invectives against the Eastern section of the State?

“As Greenville county has given Mr. Letcher a vote of confidence, it may not be inappropriate to quote his opinion of that county, as expressed in the Reform Convention:

“There is another point to which I wish to refer. The distinguished gentleman from Greenville (Mr. Chambliss) tells us, that he represents twenty-five thousand negroes on this floor, and I trust he will pardon me if I call his attention to some of the distinguishing evidences of superiority which mark his district. The district is composed of the counties of Greenville, Southampton, Nansemond, Isle of Wight, Sussex and Surry, and they have a population of 23,000 white people, 26,291 slaves, and pay a tax of \$18,579. They have also a large number of free negroes, 7,093, almost as many as there are in all Western Virginia. They have of those who cannot read and write 3,685, out of a population of 23,000. There are 2,507 slave owners in that district, and they own these 26,291 negroes. Well, how is it in other respects? Why, some of these counties are travelling the down hill road, if we may judge from the assessment of their lands. The county of Greenville has fallen since 1820 very considerably in the assessment of the value of her lands. From something like \$6.13 the acre, they have fallen now to \$2.82 an acre; and so it is in sundry other counties in the same district which I might mention. How is

it in the West, that neglected portion of the State? Our lands have been advancing in price, our taxable property has been increasing, and the amounts we pay into the treasury have been augmenting annually."

Let it be borne in mind that Mr. Letcher, in his letter, has said that while he did believe slavery to be a "*social and political*" evil, he never did consider it to be a *moral* evil; and let it be further borne in mind, that he says in that letter he stated to the people of Augusta, when he was a candidate, and only to them, that he had changed his views—and then let the reader ask himself the question, if Mr. Letcher did not speak inaccurately, if not uncandidly? For it will be seen at once, from the above extract from his speech in the Convention, that he not only believed slavery to be *morally wrong*, but that such were the violence of his feelings and the force of his convictions, he could not express them, except by taunting the East in the following language: "*The fact is that gentlemen of the East have but one idea in their heads, and that is negro-ology.*" And further, so convinced was Mr. Letcher of the *immoral* influences of slavery, that he could not express his opinion, except by resorting to the *desperate illustration of proving, by statistics, that the Eastern—the slaveholding portion of Virginia—sent more people to the Penitentiary than the West—thus, from his own lips, not only contending that slavery was morally wrong, but that it was a corrupting and depraved institution, and that its effects, where it most prevailed, were to make Penitentiary convicts.*

If this be a change of opinion, God save us from the opinions, *with all their variations*, of John Letcher!

And now let it be seen how far *facts* sustain this presentation of Mr. Letcher's record upon the institution of *slavery*! His connection with the "Ruffner Address" has been shown. It is proper now to inquire what is the "Ruffner Address." This Address is now being extensively circulated throughout the State—and can be read by as many as choose to read it; but for those who may not see, or be disposed to read it entire, the following extracts are submitted, to show that it is a *premeditated, well-studied* attack upon the institution of slavery, MORALLY, SOCIALLY AND POLITICALLY. The following is a sample of the

nature and character of this most pernicious and detestable document.

In speaking of the emancipation of slaves in Virginia, it says:

“Whatever may be thought of such a measure in reference to East Virginia, where the slaves are more numerous than the whites, there can be no rational doubt that in West Virginia the measure, had it been carried fifteen years ago, would by this time have wrought a most happy change in the condition and prospects of the country.

\*\*\*\* “We do not censure our Eastern brethren for opposing this measure so far as their part of the State is concerned. But still, we of West Virginia must deem ourselves not only unfortunate, but aggrieved, when an Eastern majority in the Legislature debars us from obtaining measures conducive to our welfare, because these same measures may not suit the policy of East Virginia.

\*\*\*\* “Though defeated for the time, the friends of gradual emancipation were not in despair. There was a general acknowledgment of the evils of slavery, and strong hopes were entertained, that, in a few years, a decided majority of the Legislature would be for ridding the country of this deleterious institution. But these hopes were sadly disappointed. East Virginia became more and more adverse, not only to emancipation in any mode or form, but to any discussion of the subject. Even in our West Virginia, though we believe no material change of sentiment has taken place, little has since been said, and nothing done, to effect an object so important to the welfare of the country.”

In speaking of the interference of Northern abolitionists, and arguing that their fanaticism had helped to defeat the emancipation of slaves, it says:

“But, fellow citizens, shall we suffer this meddlesome sect of abolitionists to blind our eyes to the evils of slavery, and to tie up our hands, when the condition of the country and the welfare of ourselves and our children summon us to immediate action.”

The author of this address enters into an abuse of Northern abolitionists *chiefly because their fanaticism had caused slaveholders to adhere more closely to their slaves and had thus thrown in the way an impediment to slavery emancipation*, and then, in speaking of Northern abolitionists on the one side and Southern politicians and ultra pro-slavery men on the other, says:

\*\*\*\* “Against the one party we affirm the right of slaveholding, under present circumstances; against the other party,

we affirm the expediency of removing slavery from West Virginia, and from every other State or portion of a State, in which the number of slaves is not too large.”

\*\*\*\*\* “All that we ask of our Eastern brethren, in regard to this matter, is, that if West Virginia shall call for a law to remove slavery from her side of the Blue Ridge, East Virginia shall not refuse her consent, because the measure may not be palatable to herself.

\*\*\*\*\* “If East Virginia apprehend that the delegates from the free counties would often speak more freely about slavery matters than she would like to hear in her central city of Richmond, let her agree to remove the seat of Government to Staunton, near the centre of our territory and of our white population, and she will be free from all annoyance of this sort.

\*\*\*\*\* “Having thus removed some grounds of misapprehension and prejudice respecting our views, we shall now proceed, fellow-citizens, to lay before you some facts and arguments, which prove the expediency of abolishing slavery in West Virginia, by a gradual process, that shall not cause any inconvenience either to society in general, or to slaveholders in particular.”

After entering into a comparison of the free and the slave States, for the purpose of showing the advantages which the free States have over the slave States, it reads:

“But this general comparison between the two classes of States, does not truly measure the effect of slavery in checking the growth and prosperity of States; because, in the first place, it takes in the new, thinly peopled slave States, where slave labor, operating on new soils of the best quality, has not had time to do *its work of impoverishment and desolation*; and because, in the second place, it takes in some States, both old and new, in which the slaves are comparatively few, and a predominance of free labor counteracts the *destructive* tendencies of slavery. Such are the old State of Maryland and the new State of Missouri; besides others—as Kentucky and Tennessee—in which slavery, *though deeply injurious*, is itself held in check by a free laboring population.”

In speaking of the decline of Virginia, it reads :

“*What has done this work of desolation?* Not war, nor pestilence; not oppression of rulers, civil or ecclesiastical—but *slavery*, A CURSE MORE DESTRUCTIVE IN ITS EFFECTS THAN ANY OF THEM.”

\*\*\*\*\* “It is in the last period of ten years, from 1830 to



1840, that **THIS CONSUMING PLAGUE OF SLAVERY** has shown its worst effects in the old Southern States.

\*\*\*\*\* “Old Virginia was the first State to sow this land of ours with slavery; she is also the first to reap *the full harvest of destruction*. Her lowland neighbors of Maryland and the Carolinas were not far behind at the *seeding*; nor are they far behind *at the gathering of desolation*. Most sorry are we for this fallen condition of ‘The Old Dominion,’ and of her neighbors; but such being the fact, we state it as an argument and a warning to our West Virginia. *It demonstrates the ruinous effects of slavery upon the countries in which the longest and most complete trial has been made.*

\*\*\*\*\* “There are certain drugs, of which large doses are poisonous, but small ones are innocent or even salutary. Slavery is not of this kind. *Large doses of it kill, it is true; but smaller doses, mix them as you will, are sure to sicken and debilitate the body politic.*

In speaking of Missouri, it says:

“Missouri is too new a country to afford instruction on this subject; but her physical advantages are drawing such a multitude of free emigrants into her, that her small amount of slavery must, ere long, give way and vanish before ‘the genius of universal emancipation’ ”

In speaking of Maryland, it says:

“Maryland has comparatively few slaves, and these are found chiefly about her old tide-water shores, where, like the locusts, they have eaten up nearly every green thing.”

In speaking of Virginia, it says:

“Our own West Virginia furnishes conclusive evidence that slavery, in all quantities and degrees, has a pernicious influence on the public welfare.”

Again, of Virginia it says:

“Her black children have sucked her so dry, that now, for a long time past, she has not milk enough for her offspring, either black or white.”

In speaking of the emigration from Virginia, it says:

“The true cause of this unexampled emigration is, that no branch of industry flourishes, or *can flourish* among us, so long as slavery is established by law, and the labor of the country is done chiefly by men, who can gain nothing by assiduity, by skill, or by economy.”

\*\*\*\*\* “You will observe also, how every class of facts that bear at all upon the subject, lead uniformly to the same conclusion; how every line of inquiry always points to slavery as the original cause of inferior prosperity or of positive decline.”

In speaking of the evil influences of slavery on manufactures, it says:

“This can be attributed only to slavery, which paralyzes our energies, disperses our population, and keeps us few and poor, in spite of the bountiful gifts of nature, with which a benign Providence has endowed our country.”

In speaking, again, of the emigration from Virginia, it says:

“This remarkable fact, that they will quit their country, rather than their ruinous system of agriculture, proves that their institution of slavery disqualifies them to pursue any occupation, except this same ruinous system of agriculture.”

Of commerce and navigation, it says:

“In fact the commerce of *our old slave-eaten Commonwealth* has decayed and dwindled away to a mere pittance in the general mass of American trade.”

\*\*\*\*\* “We do not blame our Southern people for abstaining from all employments of this kind. What could they do? Set their negroes to building ships? Who ever imagined such an absurdity? But could they not hire white men to do such things? No: for in the first place, Southern white men have no skill in such matters; and in the second place, Northern workmen cannot be hired in the South, without receiving a heavy premium for working in a slave State.”

The hurtful effects of Slavery upon common schools and popular education are thus portrayed. After giving elaborate statistics upon this subject, it says:

“We give these only as approximations to the truth, but they are sufficiently near to show, beyond any manner of doubt, that slavery exerts a most pernicious influence on the cause of education. This it does by keeping the white population thinly scattered and poor, and making the poorer part of them generally indifferent about the education of their children.”

\*\*\*\*\* “A similar difference between the free States and slave States appears in the West, when we compare Ohio with Kentucky and Tennessee. Four times as large a proportion of children attend school in Ohio, as in the other two States; while the proportion of illiterates is only one-fourth as great. On the whole, the evidence on this subject is complete and unquestion-

able. The people in the slave States are not, and cannot be, half as well accommodated with schools, as in the free States; *and slavery inflicts on multitudes of them the curse of ignorance and mental degradation through life.*"

\*\*\*\*\* "Having thus briefly, yet we believe sufficiently, established the proposition that *slavery is pernicious to the welfare of States*, we shall conclude the argument by establishing the particular proposition, that *slavery is pernicious to the welfare of West Virginia*. This being contained in the general proposition does not need any separate proof; yet, lest some people should imagine that West Virginia is an exception, and has not suffered from slavery, we shall demonstrate to you the contrary by plain facts—facts derived from actual experience—the very best evidence which the nature of the case admits of. We compare the past progress and present condition of West Virginia, with the past progress and present condition of the countries adjacent to her."

In speaking of the Valley of Virginia, it says:

"What a pity that so rich and so lovely a land **SHOULD BE AFFLICTED WITH THIS YELLOW FEVER AND THIS BLACK VOMIT.**

\*\*\*\*\* "Lands in West Virginia are much cheaper than similar lands in the free country North of Virginia. Yet, rather than buy and cultivate these good cheap Virginia lands, Northern farmers go farther, pay more, and fare worse; so they do, and so they will. They look upon all Virginia as an *infected country*—AND SO IT IS.

\*\*\*\*\* "We glory in Wheeling, because she, only, in Virginia deserves to be called a manufacturing town. For this her citizens deserve to be crowned—not with laurel—but with the solid gold of prosperity. But, how came it that Wheeling, and next to her, Wellsburg—of all the towns in Virginia, should become manufacturing towns? Answer: They breathe the atmosphere of free States, almost touching them on both sides. But again: Seeing that Wheeling, as a seat for manufactures, is equal to Pittsburg, and inferior to no town in America, except Richmond; and that, moreover, she has almost no slaves—why is Wheeling so far behind Pittsburg, and comparatively so slow in her growth? Answer: She is in a country in which slavery is established by law.

"Thus it appears, fellow-citizens, by infallible proofs, that West Virginia, in all her parts and all her interests, has suffered immensely from the institution of slavery.

"The bad policy of the Legislature in former times, in respect to roads and land surveys west of the Alleghany, did great in-

jury to the country. But, after allowance is made for this, a vast balance of injury is chargeable to slavery, and to nothing else. In those parts west of the Alleghany, upon the Ohio and its navigable waters, where want of roads and disputed land titles did least injury—there, too, *the corrosive touch of slavery has also shown its cankerous effects.*

To illustrate the injurious influence of slavery, it says:

*“Comparatively few slaves in a country, especially one like ours, may do it immense injury.*

\*\*\*\* *“Slavery naturally tends to increase from small beginnings, until the slaves outnumber the whites and the country IS RUINED.*

\*\*\*\* *“The price of cotton will probably decline more and more, and consequently the value of slaves; then also the law of slave increase, by which it gains on the white population, will operate in West Virginia with ruinous effect, unless prevented by law.*

\*\*\*\* *“Cast it off, west Virginians, whilst yet you have the power; for if you let it descend unbroken to your children, it will have grown to A MOUNTAIN OF MISERY UPON THEIR HEADS.*

“In plain terms, fellow-citizens, Eastern slaveholders will come with their multitudes of slaves to settle upon the fresh lands of West Virginia. Eastern slaves will be sent by thousands for a market in West Virginia. Every valley will echo with the cry ‘Negroes! Negroes for sale! Dog cheap! Dog cheap!’” And because they are dog cheap, many of our people will buy them. We have shown how slavery has prepared the people for this: how a little slavery makes way for more, and how the law of slave increase operates to fill up every part of the country to the same level with slaves.

“And then, fellow-citizens, when you have suffered your country to be filled with negro slaves instead of white freemen; when its population shall be as motley as Joseph’s coat of many colors—as ring-streaked and speckled as father Jacob’s flock was in Padan Aram—what will the white basis of representation avail you, if you obtain it? Whether you obtain it or not, East Virginia will have triumphed; or rather *slavery* will have triumphed, AND ALL VIRGINIA WILL HAVE BECOME A LAND OF DARKNESS AND OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

“Then, by a forbearance which has no merit, and a supineness which has no excuse, you will have given to your children, for their inheritance, this lovely land *blackened with a negro population—the offscourings of Eastern Virginia—the fag end of*

*slavery—the loathsome dregs of that CUP OF ABOMINATION, which has already sickened to death the Eastern half of our Commonwealth.*

“Delay not then, we beseech you, to raise a barrier against *this Stygian inundation*—to stand at the Blue Ridge, and with sovereign energy, say to *this Black Sea of misery*, “Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther.”

“To show that the extinction of slavery among us is practicable without injustice or injury to any man, we present you the following *outlines of a scheme for the removal of slavery*:

“*Let the farther importation of slaves into West Virginia be prohibited by law.*

“The expediency of this measure is obvious.

“*Let the exportation of slaves be freely permitted, as heretofore; but with this restriction, that children of slaves born after a certain day shall not be exported at all after they are five years old, nor those under that age, unless the slaves of the same negro family be exported with them.*

“*Let the existing generation of slaves remain in their present condition, but let their offspring, born after a certain day, be emancipated at an age not exceeding twenty-five years.*

“*Let masters be required to have the heirs of emancipation taught reading, writing and arithmetic; and let churches and benevolent people attend to their religious instruction.* Thus an improved class of free negroes would be raised up. No objection could be made to their literary education, after emancipation was decreed.

“Finally, in order to hasten the extinction of slavery, where the people desire it, in counties containing few slaves, *the law might authorize the people of any county by some very large majority, or by consent of a majority of the slaveholders to decree the removal or emancipation of all the slaves of the county, within a certain term of years, seven, ten or fifteen, according to the number of the slaves.*

“Now, fellow-citizens, it is for you to determine whether the slavery question shall be considered, discussed and decided, at this critical turning point of your country’s history—or whether it shall lie dormant until *the doom of West Virginia is sealed.* May Heaven direct your minds to the course dictated by patriotism, by humanity and by your own true interest.

A SLAVE HOLDER OF WEST VIRGINIA.”

Nor is this all! To show, still further, that Mr. Letcher was altogether hostile to slavery, after his alleged change of opinion, and that whenever he gave a vote it embodied an expression of

his prejudices against slaveholders and slavery, the attention of the reader is called to the fact:

1st, That when Mr. Letcher was called upon to vote in the Reform Convention upon the subjects of taxation and the tax which should be assessed upon slaves, he voted that slaves *under twelve years of age* should be *taxed*—and,

2d, That whenever a slave was condemned to be hung or sentenced to transportation, *the owner of said slave should not be paid for his loss.*

These votes, as indeed his whole career, show that every thing Mr. Letcher did or said manifest his extreme prejudices against the institution of slavery, and his antagonism and injustice to slave-owners.

Such is Mr. Letcher's record, and such are the objections to his past course and conduct, that the Editors of the leading Democratic journal of the State, the *Richmond Enquirer*, could not refrain from an earnest and able specification of his numerous disqualifications to be the Governor of Virginia.

The following extracts from the columns of that journal are a fair sample of his many past follies and transgressions. The limits of this pamphlet will, of course, prevent the insertion of the editorials at large, but in order to test the accuracy of these extracts, the dates of the paper in which they respectively appear are given.

On November the 5th, 1858, the *Richmond Enquirer*, in speaking of John Letcher's relation to the *Know Nothing party*, said:

“Nor do we charge that Mr. Letcher ever joined the organization, but we say that Mr. Letcher and the partisans who were desirous of nominating him as a *tertium quid*, at the Staunton Convention, did make Governor Wise's uncompromising opposition to the Know Nothing party a chief ground of objection to his nomination. *He* was heard to express an uncertainty as to whether he would support the choice of the Convention.”

In the issue of November the 11th, the *Richmond Enquirer* said:

“We have altogether failed to discover an instance in which Mr. Letcher has lent a *prompt, entire* and unhesitating support to any single public measure proposed for the constitutional protection of the institution of slavery.”

Again, in the issue of November the 24th, the Richmond Enquirer said:

“‘AN ARMED NEUTRAL.’—The communication in our issue of to-day, over the above signature, puts a question to us, which we do not hesitate to answer.

“Mr. Letcher was desirous to oust Mr. Hunter from the Senate in 1852, and Governor Wise was Mr. Letcher’s first choice for the seat in the Senate. Our correspondent further asks whether Mr. Letcher wrote to Gov. Wise, urging him to oppose Mr. Hunter. This question we decline to answer. Let our correspondent apply directly to Mr. Letcher, himself, to answer this question.

“One thing is certain, Mr. Letcher cannot go into the discussion of this matter, without convicting himself of wilful deceit. It is well known how bitterly Mr. Letcher opposed the nomination of Gov. Wise, in 1854, and that Mr. Letcher manifested a willingness to defeat his election even after the nomination was made. Even his unwilling declarations of adhesion to the Democratic ticket, opposed as they were, by contradictory acts and declarations, are sufficient to convict him.

“On Wednesday last, Mr. Roger A. Pryor related to a meeting of the Richmond Democracy a conversation had with Mr. Letcher shortly after the nomination at Staunton. Mr. Letcher said that Mr. Wise was a ‘bitter pill for him to swallow;’ that he had warmly opposed Wise in 1840, while, he, Letcher was editor of a newspaper, and hence found it difficult to give him a warm support; nevertheless, he was willing to acquiesce in the nomination for the sake of the party.

“If Mr. Letcher made the declarations attributed to him by Mr. Pryor, he was guilty, we repeat it, as we have repeated it *viva voce* before the Democracy of Richmond, of hypocrisy and falsehood.

“The pretence that the man who was his chosen favorite in 1851-’52, for the place of United States Senator from Virginia was, as candidate for Governor, a ‘bitter pill’ in 1854-’55, merely because of events as far back as 1840, constitutes nothing less than voluntary untruth.

“We also deny the assertion that Mr. Letcher was willing to acquiesce in the nomination for the sake of the party. He was finally forced into an unwilling and churlish acquiescence, merely for the sake of retaining his own seat in Congress, and in spite of his well known inclinations towards Know Nothingism.

“Is this ‘Honest John Letcher?’ Has honesty itself become a *lucus a non lucendo*?”

On the 25th, it said:

“When Mr. Newton says ‘we have arrived at that period in our history which was so clearly foreseen, and so deeply deplored, by the great political philosophers of the South,’ shall we place at the head of public affairs the *only man*, among his competitors in *Virginia*, who denied the *philosophy* of the ‘great political philosophers of the South,’ and pronounced the great subject of their theories as ‘a social and political evil’—a ‘black vomit’ and ‘yellow fever?’ ”

Again, on the 26th, it says:

“*John Letcher is the anti-internal improvement candidate for the Democratic nomination.* This is the whole secret of the otherwise unaccountable efforts now made in his favor.”

Again, on the 29th, it says:

“In 1847, Mr. Letcher solicited ‘a calm and conclusive’ argument against slavery, the very document his friend and supporter, the Editor of ‘The South,’ pronounced, in all the charity of special friendship, ‘A PIECE OF FOLLY FOR WHICH WE CAN SCARCELY VENTURE AN APOLOGY MUCH LESS A JUSTIFICATION,’ and, in regard to which same document, ‘THE SOUTH’ ‘ASSURED THE ‘WING’ OF OUR DETESTATION FOR THE SENTIMENTS OF DR. RUFFNER’S ADDRESS.’ ‘The South’ further charged—that the address ‘IS EVIDENTLY AN ATROCIOUS LIBEL ON THE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF THE SOUTH, AS WELL AS A MOST UNPHILOSOPHICAL AND INACCURATE REPRESENTATION OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMICAL INFLUENCES OF SLAVERY.’ ”

Again, on the 30th, it says:

“JOHN LETCHER’S KNOW NOTHING SPEECH—HIS FIRST NOMINATION FOR GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.—We beg that some of Mr. Letcher’s friends will go to the Petersburg Convention well prepared with the particulars of the following *resumé* of undeniable facts.

“In 1854, Mr. Letcher made a speech assailing the Administration of Franklin Pierce for the nomination of Pierre Soulé as Minister to Spain. The language and bearing of this discourse was such, that a prominent Democrat of the Tenth Legion denounced it, openly, as a ‘Know Nothing speech.’ Shortly afterwards, the Know Nothings of Rockingham, assembled in council, recommended Mr. Letcher to the Order as a candidate for Governor.

“A letter was then published by a Mr. Norment, declaring that Mr. Letcher did not belong to the Order. This called forth a letter from Mr. Letcher, admitting that he was not a member of



the Order, but *containing no disapproval whatever of its organization or its doctrines.*

"Give us the speech and the two letters. Mr. Letcher's friends certainly desire that his *complete* record shall be placed before the Convention."

Again, on the 30th, it says:

"THE ADDRESS OF DR. RUFFNER.—We publish to-day the address of Dr. Ruffner, about which so much has been said, but about which very little is known by the Democracy. The endorsement and approval of this address by Mr. Letcher has been the chief cause of our objection to him. And now, to let the party act upon the same evidence that we have acted upon, we reproduce the anti-slavery address.

"We believe that Mr. Letcher's approval of this address, and his soliciting its publication, constitute serious objections to, and with this opinion we have opposed, his nomination. Should the Democracy judge otherwise, and nominate Mr. Letcher, all the consequences that may follow that nomination will be upon other heads than ours. We have opposed the policy of his nomination, we have freely and fairly canvassed his record, we have acted from a firm conviction of the duty we owe the party, to warn it against a nomination that we believe would result most disastrously for the party, in its relations to both State and Federal politics.

"We feel satisfied that a perusal of this address will convince any impartial Democrat that Mr. Letcher's nomination would be impolitic and unwise; and as there are many other Democrats from whom a selection may be made, that they will readily see the wisdom of our course and nominate some other man. To select any man with anti-slavery sentiments staining his record, in preference to Henry A. Edmundson, the friend and supporter of Brooks, will, indeed, be misunderstood North, South, East and West. And, when the fact becomes known, that this Democrat, with an anti-slavery record, has no greater qualifications than any of his competitors, it will be difficult to convince the world that he was not selected because of his anti-slavery sentiments. In Monday's paper we shall publish Mr. Letcher's letter to Mr. Pryor, and Dr. Ruffner's reply to that letter, and thus leave to the Convention the settlement of the contest."

Again, the Richmond Enquirer, of November 30th, says:

"While Mr. Letcher pretended to support the claims of Mr. Leake for the nomination, he was himself an eager aspirant for the same nomination. We defy Mr. Letcher to deny this. We are also informed that Mr. Letcher, after the nomination was made at Staunton, wrote to a member of the Democratic party,

urging him to come out as an independent candidate in opposition to the regular nominee. We call upon Mr. Letcher to pronounce as to the truth or falsehood of this charge.

“Nor are these the only evidences that Mr. Letcher’s alleged reason for opposition to Governor Wise was a pure deceit. Mr. Letcher contradicted himself repeatedly during the time which elapsed between the Democratic nomination and the election—at one time alleging a willingness to support the nominee—at another expressing uncertainty, as to whether he would—if not absolute unwillingness to do so. This Mr. Letcher cannot deny.”

Such is the spirit and style in which the *Richmond Enquirer*, a paper which has long and faithfully been in the service and interest of the Democratic party, *felt constrained to protest against the nomination of John Letcher*. Notwithstanding all this, however, an excited and inconsiderate majority, in spite of the earnest and indignant remonstrance of not only a respectable, but a *very large* minority of the Petersburg Convention, presented John Letcher as a candidate for the first office within the gift of the people of Virginia.

While the *Richmond Enquirer* has acquiesced in this nomination, knowing the charges it preferred against Mr. Letcher to have been based upon *indisputable evidence*, those charges yet remain *unrecanted* by that paper, as will be seen by the following language, which appeared in its editorial columns, on the 7th of February last, *after the action of the Petersburg Convention*:

“Suffice it to say, so far as the whole tenor and spirit of our opposition to the nomination of Mr. Letcher is concerned we have no recantation to make—no qualification to add.”

And, at a still later date, (March the 8th, 1859,) and in yet more emphatic terms, the *Enquirer* said:

“Those opinions advanced against the nomination of John Letcher, having been honestly and conscientiously entertained, have never been *recanted* by us and *never will be*.”

The limits of this pamphlet might be almost *indefinitely* extended with other extracts, showing the past opinions and career of John Letcher.

But surely these must be enough! They prove his hostility

to the institution of slavery to be *altogether intemperate and unmitigated*.

They prove that he regarded its existence as at war with the agricultural, commercial and manufacturing interests of Virginia.

That wherever it existed, there vice, ignorance, poverty and crime most prevailed.

That not only of these, was it the nursery, but that it was the manufacturer of Penitentiary convicts.

That it was not only an evil, but a curse which West Virginia should not long tolerate, and which he would take steps at once to abolish.

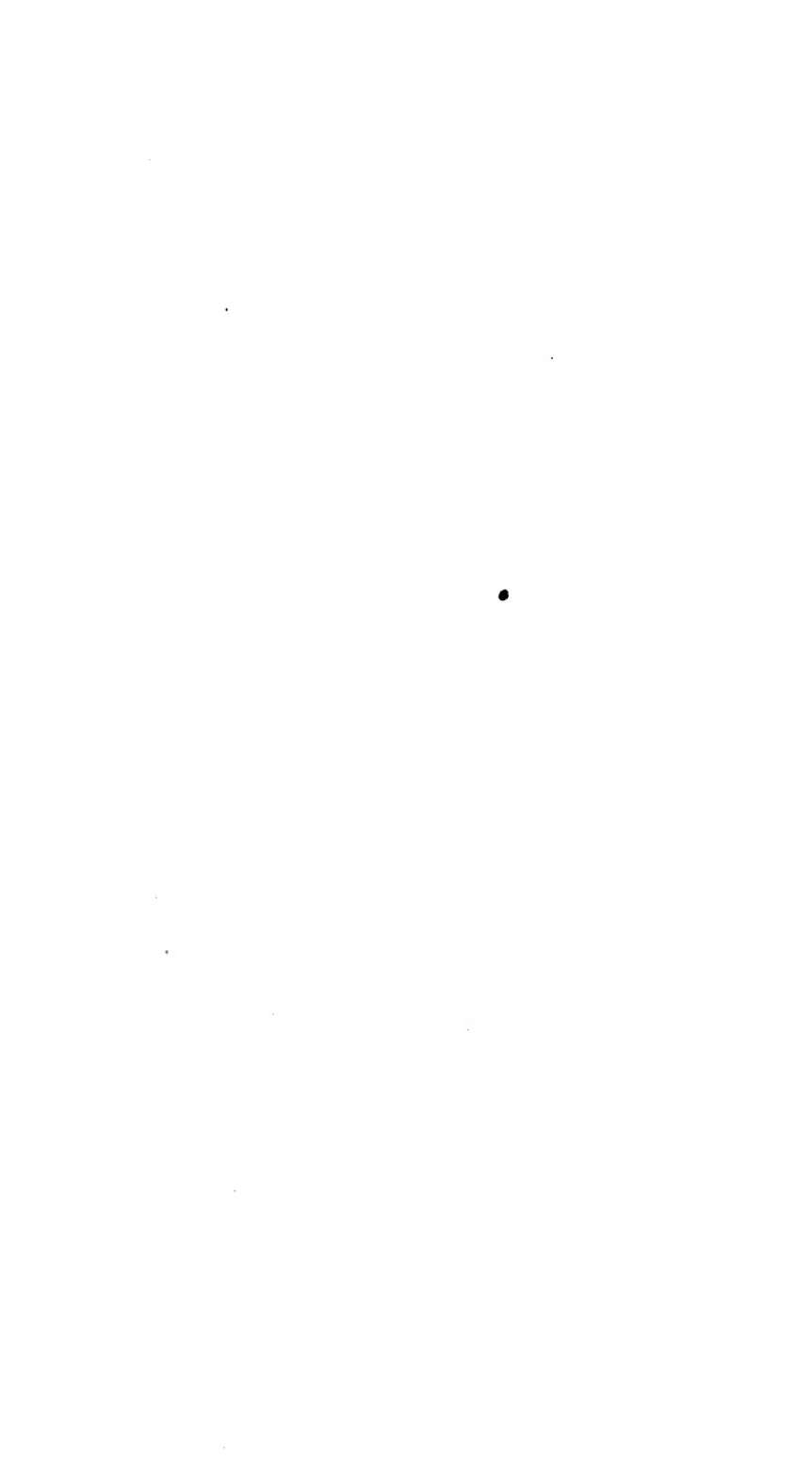
And that to this end, he would sever his native State in twain, and make of her two independent and hostile sovereignties.

In atonement for all this, the most that he can do is to point to some scattering speeches, lately made in Congress, when he represented a slave-holding and slave-sustaining constituency—when Congress was divided into a slave and an anti-slave, party and when the force of circumstances thus determined his position.

Though for many years a prominent and a public man, Virginian born and bred, he asks the charity of oblivion for nearly the whole of his life—not for political transgressions of any ordinary character, but for heresies which it is unpardonable for any Virginian to entertain.

That Virginia should be one and inseparable, now and forever, is, or ought to be, a sentiment, not only common, but dear to all her citizens, without regard to party or section.

It rises above all party dictation—party discipline cannot influence it, nor party tactics control it; and, therefore, the people of all parties should rise up and as one man repudiate the claims to the suffrages of Virginians of the man whose career has been disclosed by the foregoing authenticated facts.





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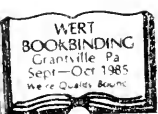












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